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Mr Chris Foley  
Headteacher  
Holy Family Roman Catholic and Church of England College  
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Dear Mr Foley

### **Short inspection of Holy Family Roman Catholic and Church of England College**

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 2017 with Timothy Gartside, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in May 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You took over as headteacher in September 2016, after the retirement of the previous headteacher. In this short time, you have had a transformational impact on a school that, although doing well, had to some extent lost sight of how it could do even better. You have rapidly set the school on course for further improvement and inspired members of the school community to share your ambition that soon Holy Family will be outstanding. As one parent commented, 'I believe the appointment of the new headteacher has had a significant and positive impact on the school and I feel that my children will receive the education that they deserve with strong teaching and excellent resources.' This positive comment was not untypical; the school is well regarded in the locality and the vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, would recommend this school to other parents.

Holy Family exudes a welcoming atmosphere and pupils shared with inspectors the pride they feel in their school where, as one pupil commented, 'everyone knows one another'. Indeed, a parent echoed this point of view: 'Holy Family is, as its name suggests, a true family. It ensures that the pupils become well-rounded individuals.' Pupils mingle well together in social spaces and behave well in lessons for the most part. As a result, there is a calm ambience around the school that is highly conducive to pupils' well-being.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified strengths in many areas of the school's work, for example in parental engagement and pupils' behaviour. School leaders have ensured that these strengths have been maintained. However, the previous inspection report indicated that improvements were required in mathematics and also in teaching, particularly regarding teachers' questioning. School leaders have been particularly successful in tackling weaknesses in mathematics and this subject area is now a strength.

For the most part, pupils attend school regularly. However, this was not the case for a small number of disadvantaged pupils for whom the rates of persistent absenteeism have historically been well above average. Since you arrived, you have used additional funds available to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium wisely to arrest this pattern of poor attendance. Your intervention in this respect has already had a positive impact and as a result there has been a substantial improvement in the attendance of this group of pupils, with almost a third of them now attending just as regularly as other pupils in the school.

During this inspection you were frank with us regarding where you feel there is still work to be done, for example in improving teaching further. Your self-evaluation is highly accurate and there was a strong correlation between the areas you have recognised as relative weaknesses and those identified by inspectors. Your development plan has a clear focus on the correct priorities and across the school there is a shared vision for further improvement. You are passionate that teaching should improve apace and are keen to ensure that existing good practice, for example in mathematics, should be shared even more effectively. You have had a strong influence on increasing the culture of accountability so that all staff are aware of the contribution they can make to the school's further development.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Staff are trained thoroughly in all aspects of safeguarding. Governors have also had extensive safeguarding training and are highly alert to the risks that pupils may face in wider society, working effectively with school leaders to ensure that procedures are followed meticulously in the best interests of pupils. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said they feel safe in the school, and parents who responded to the online questionnaire echoed this point of view. Pupils appreciate the support provided by the school nurse for both physical and mental health issues. The school works effectively with outside agencies, such as the police, and, as a result, pupils are very knowledgeable about the dangers they might face in the outside world, such as child sexual exploitation. They feel that they can confide in staff if they have a problem. Although some pupils had experience of bullying, all those spoken to felt that teachers were highly effective in sorting it out. It was impressive that, in response to a question relating to homophobic bullying, older pupils were unanimous that they themselves would not allow such bullying to go on in their school.

## Inspection findings

During this short inspection, inspectors focused on a number of lines of enquiry arising from analysis of information about the school available to inspectors prior to the inspection.

- In most performance indicators the school has maintained high standards since the previous inspection and, for the most part, pupils who enter the school with low prior attainment and those of middle ability tend to do well. However, you and your senior leadership team have correctly identified that the most able pupils, including those that are disadvantaged, could do better. You have developed a number of strategies, such as improving the effectiveness of teachers' questioning, in order to tackle this. Inspection evidence confirms that your actions have already started to make a difference.
- Following on from the findings of the previous inspection, you have encouraged all staff to make their teaching more challenging. This has already had some impact and, as a result, the most able pupils, including those that are disadvantaged, across the school now make progress much more in line with their potential. School leaders are confident that the proportion of pupils on target to achieve the best results in their forthcoming public examinations is greater than in previous years, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Nevertheless, you acknowledge that more needs to be done to ensure that the most able pupils achieve their potential in all subjects. For example, the most able pupils do not have the opportunity to follow courses in science that may be better suited to their future career aspirations. You and the governing body have identified this as an area of the curriculum that requires further development.
- You also shared with inspectors your concerns that some of the most able pupils appear to lack aspiration and confidence when they come to apply for higher education. Again, you have plans in place to address this through more effective careers advice and guidance and extending links with higher education institutions.
- You have developed a sophisticated system of assessment that quickly identifies underachievement and you take swift action when pupils fall behind. As a result, the data on current pupils' progress shows that the large majority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve well across most subjects and year groups. However, not all teachers consistently follow the school's marking policy.
- Girls slightly underachieved in comparison to boys in English and mathematics in their examinations in 2016. This imbalance has now been redressed and girls are on target to do as least as well as their male counterparts across all year groups.
- You have identified certain subjects where performance has been weak for some time and you have used a wide range of strategies, such as performance management and changes to the curriculum, to sort this out. This has proved successful in some subjects. However, you frankly admit that history still gives cause for concern. Inspection evidence supports your view that pupils do not always make good progress in this subject.

- Governors are conscientious and self-critical. They fully support you in your drive to improve this school further. They have undertaken substantial training and as a result are increasingly confident in holding you and other staff to account.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the level of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils, is increased further through the curriculum and improvements to teaching
- all marking reflects the school's policy by embedding existing initiatives and sharing good practice in this regard more effectively
- the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in history improve
- all pupils are encouraged to be ambitious for their future lives through more effective careers information, advice and guidance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Salford, the director of education for the Diocese of Manchester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rochdale. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joan Bonenfant  
**Senior Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, we met with you, senior leaders, a representative of the local authority and members of the governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the Diocese of Salford. Inspectors met with groups of pupils, both formally and informally. We considered the 57 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 23 submissions to the free text survey. In addition, we also considered the responses of pupils and members of staff to their respective surveys. We visited a number of classrooms and scrutinised pupils' books in a range of subjects.

Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation provided by the school, including the following: the school's self-evaluation of its work; information on attendance; information on pupils' current progress; minutes of meetings of the governing body; the school development plan; analysis of the impact of expenditure of the pupil premium; records relating to behaviour; and information on safeguarding.

The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.